This is what my mother learned about restrictions during pregnancy: 843 784

"When a woman first knows that she is pregnant she has to deprive herself of many things that she is used to doing. For instance, she is not allowed to eat certain foods, like heart and innards. The old people say that this will discolor the mother's face. If she eats leg muscles they say she will have cramps. If she eats brains, her child will have a snotty nose. And she cannot stand in the doorway of her home to look outside. If there is something she wants to see outside, she has to go all the way out and stand there, not in the doorway. If she didn't go all the way out she would have hard labor, they said. Those old Indians were very strict with their beliefs. Nowadays we would say they were superstitious. Back then it was just their way of life." 843 784 262 843 784

My grandmother, AnadaAki, told me this story of her first childbirth:

"When I first thought I was pregnant I just looked at the moon, and I started counting from there. I counted nine moons, and on the tenth moon I went into labor. Some women have a real hard time, and others find it easy. Myself, I went into labor at night. I kept on with it all the next day, that night, and on through the morning. It must have been near noon when my baby was born. We just had our Indian doctors around, and they made brews for us. One of these doctors was called that final morning. My husband gave him his pick of the horses, for payment. When he had picked out his horse he came right in and prayed for me and doctored me. After that I started to feel good and cheerful. 844 845

"Right after the baby was born and taken care of, my mother started to clean me. After I was cleaned she started massaging my bones back into place. I was given some broth to drink and then she laid me down to rest. That first baby died because in the excitement my mother cut the navel cord too short and air got into the baby's stomach and killed it. If

844 I had been in a hospital they might have operated and saved
845 it. There was no Indian doctor right there to help. They have
a lot of good herbs and medicines. Too bad modern doctors
759 don't learn them and use them. If they did it would be very
good."

846 By my grandmothers' ways, when a baby is born it is bundled up right away in old rags. The girl's mother would save old rags for her daughter beforehand. Of course, they were cleaned rags. The baby would be dressed like this for the first thirty days, and the mother, too. She would continue to wear the clothes she used during her pregnancy. She usually stayed with her own mother during this time, away from her husband. No sick person could stay around the home where she was taken care of. She didn't do any heavy work during those thirty days.

846 During this period of confinement the new mother was
783 bathed and given a cleansing ceremony every four days. Her mother would wash her and then cover her up with a blanket. She was made to sit by the altar, where incense was made. The incense went up under her blanket and purified her body. My grandmother, AnadaAki, still went through all this in her time.

846 To bring the mother's body back to shape, in addition to massages, she was made to wear a "belt" or girdle of rawhide. This was wide enough to cover her abdomen, and tied firmly. She did not use pins on any of the rag clothing. She tied her baby's rag bundle together with buckskin cords. This was kind of a trial period, to make sure everybody would survive
[165] the new birth. In those days children often died in their first days, and it was not unusual for mothers to die from childbirth, too.

At the end of the thirty days they would move camp, the mother would be cleansed once more, and they would get dressed in their new clothes. Usually the child got a new cradleboard.

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up at Fort Benton, the main trading post for the Piegans in Montana. He worked as a teamster on bull trains (wagon trains pulled by bulls) over the old Whoop-Up Trail between Fort Benton and Edmonton, Alberta. During these trips, he got to know the family of a Piegan named Red Tail Feathers and his two Blood wives, Mountain Lion Woman and Woman's Word. Among the children of this family was Bird Rattler and Awok-Aki, or "Smart Woman," who became Joe Beebe's wife. Their only child was Grandma's Joe Beebe. When the boy was born, AwokAki was not able to pass her afterbirth. Joe Beebe wanted to get the white doctor, but the wives of Red Tail Feathers had no faith in him and insisted on doctoring AwokAki themselves. She passed away after six days.

Old Joe Beebe married again, but continued to provide for his two mothers-in-law. Mountain Lion Woman raised little Joe for the first seven years of his life. After AwokAki's death, this old lady took him to women who had babies so that he could nurse from them. If they weren't available, she made broths for him, letting him suck on her own dry breasts for contentment. His continued sucking finally caused milk to come from her breasts, so that she was able to nurse her grandson for some time. The old lady delighted in showing off whenever visitors were around that she could nurse the baby.

When young Joe Beebe was about seven, his father placed him in the Dunbow Boarding School, where he stayed for most of the next twelve years. Many other boys from this reserve were sent to Dunbow. At the age of nineteen he returned to the reserve to work as interpreter and scout for the Mounted Police. Although his speech and appearance led many to think of him as a white man, he soon let his hair grow long enough to braid and began to take part in the frequent powwows. He became an excellent Grass Dancer, earning the right to dance with the Forked Stick during the Dog Feast, a ceremony our People had adopted from the Assiniboines.

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